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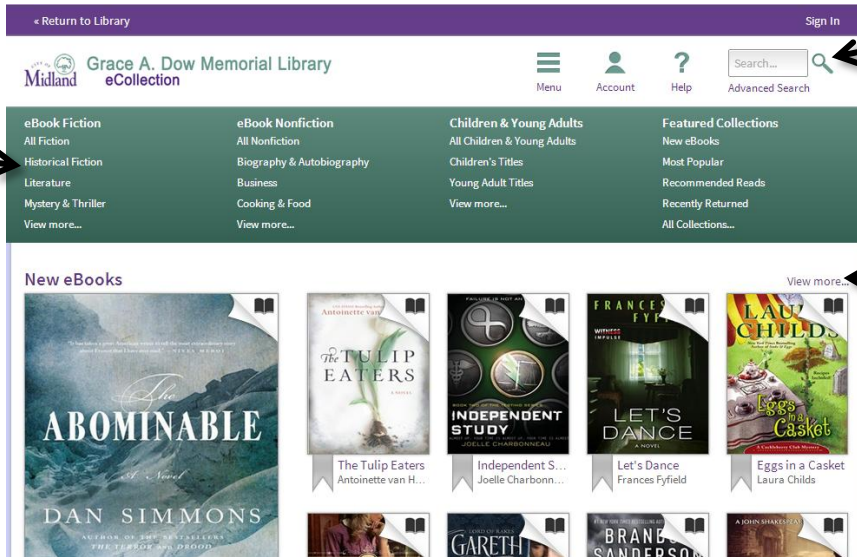
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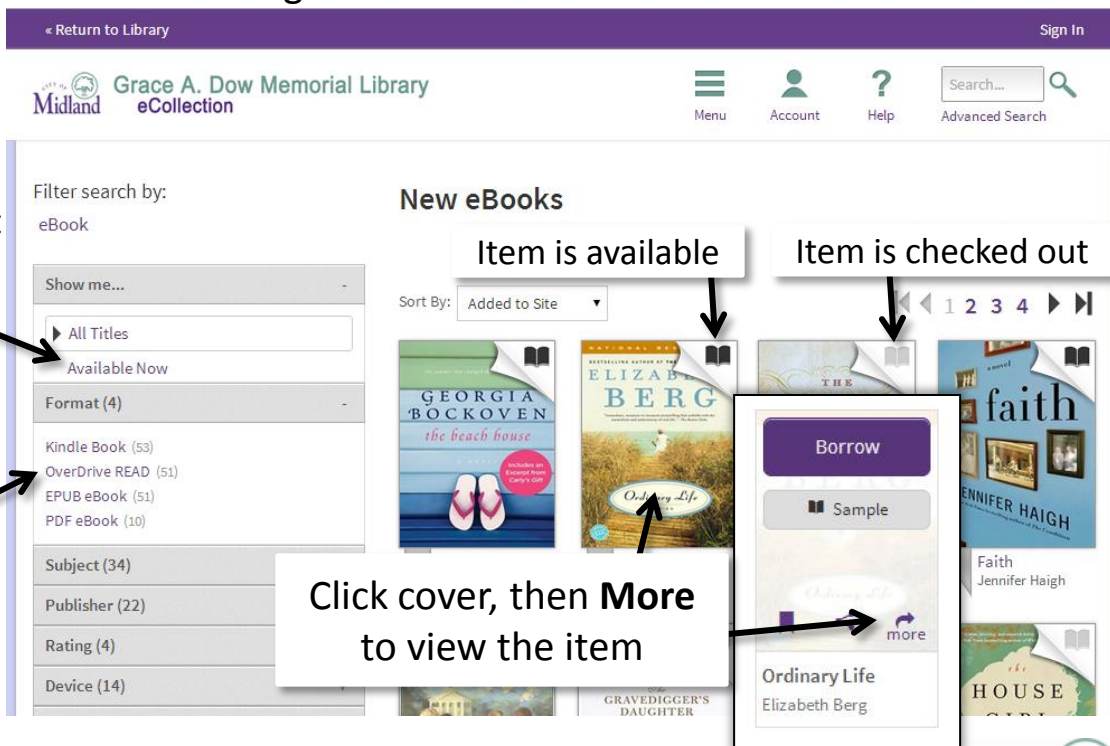
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Elizabeth Berg

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*Ordinary Life:  
A Love Story*

Mavis McPherson is locked in the bathroom and will not come out. The tub is lined with pillows and blankets. Under the sink, next to the extra toilet paper, there is an economy-sized box of Wheat Thins, a bowl of apples, and a six-pack of Heath bars. Against the wall, under the towel rack, is a case of Orangina, and next to that is a neat pile of magazines and three library books. A spiral-bound notebook and pen lie on top of the toilet tank. Hanging from the hook on the back of the door are several changes of underwear.

Mavis is on retreat, she tells her husband through the crack in the door when he comes home that evening. Al volunteers at St. Mary's Hospital, dividing his time between delivering newspapers to patients and helping maintenance fix faulty equipment, though this is a secret from the administration—volunteers aren't supposed to do that. Al's mechanical skills are legendary, but he is not known for his sense of humor. "Come on, Mavis," he sighs. "What's for dinner?"

"You might as well go on over to Big Boy," Mavis tells him. "I'm not cooking dinner. I'm not coming out for a week or so. It's nothing personal." She leans her ear against the crack in the door, listening for his response.

3% of *Ordinary Life: Stories* 1 of 26 pages in chapter.

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**Ordinary Life** Elizabeth Berg

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